

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 02439 122101Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/066 W

-----086859 122108Z /73

P 122051Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7393  
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL  
ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS POUCH

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E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION TO NO-ELECTION DECISION

REF: OTTAWA 2421

1. MEDIA HAS GIVEN PREDICTABLY HEAVY ATTENTION TO PM TRUDEAU'S MAY 11 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SUMMER ELECTION (REFTEL). STORY RECEIVED PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE IN MAY 12 GLOBE AND MAIL, LEDEVOIR AND MONTREAL GAZETTE. LE DEVOIR CARRIED BANNER HEADLINE "NO ELECTIONS IN JULY."

2. MEDIA PASSED QUICKLY OVER TRUDEAU'S STATED REASONS FOR DECISION, I.E., DESIRE TO HAVE PARLIAMENT TACKLE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING COUNTRY AND FACT THAT CANADIAN PEOPLE DID NOT WANT SUMMER ELECTION, AND PINNED DECISION ON ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS. MAY 12 GLOBE AND MAIL FRONT-PAGE STORY WAS ENTITLED "ELECTION POSTPONED, PM DECIDES TO WAIT FOR LIBERAL RECOVERY." SIMILARLY, FRONTPAGE MONTREAL GAZETTE NEWS ANALYSIS RAN UNDER HEADLINE "TRUDEAU'S BIGGEST GAMBLE -- OR IS IT PIERRE'S FOLLY." GAZETTE  
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STORY NOTED THAT DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE MORE DEMORALIZING FOR LIBERALS THAN FOR OPPOSITION PARTIES. IT POINTED OUT THAT BY DELAYING ELECTION UNTIL CLOSER TO END OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S 5-YEAR MANDATE "TRUDEAU HAS PUT HIMSELF AT THE MERCY OF CIRCUMSTANCES." STORY POINTED OUT THAT LAST PM TO WAIT UNTIL 5TH YEAR WAS R.B. BENNETT WHO SUFFERED CONVINCING DEFEAT IN 1935.

3. SEVERAL PAPERS CITED COSTS INVOLVED IN ELECTION DELAY AFTER PARTIES AND CANDIDATES HAD STARTED RUNNING. MAY 12 GLOBE AND MAIL NOTED REPORTS THAT FEDERAL NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) HAD ALREADY SPENT BETWEEN ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND AND TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS IN PREPARATION FOR CAMPAIGN WHILE NDP PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATIONS HAD SPENT ANOTHER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS.

4. NATIONAL TV NETWORKS DEVOTED LARGE SEGMENTS OF MAY 11 PM NEWS BROADCAST TIME TO THE STORY. ABOUT HALF OF CTV EVENING NEWS, FOR EXAMPLE, CONSISTED OF FULL OTTAWA COVERAGE, REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND ANALYSIS BY CTV COMMENTATOR BRUCE PHILIPS. TORONTO REPORTER STRESSED TRUDEAU "COLD FEET" THEME ARTICULATED BY TORY MP HEATH MACQUARRIE WHO SAID, "YOU DON'T PUT RUNNING SHOES ON COLD FEET." CTV QUEBEC REPORTER NOTED THAT POSSIBLE NEW TIMING MIGHT MEAN THAT PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) GOVERNMENT REFERENDUM COULD COME AT TIME OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS. PHILIPS DISMISSED TRUDEAU CLAIM THAT CANADIAN PEOPLE DO NOT WANT SUMMER ELECTION. RATHER, PHILIPS ASSERTED, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT TRUDEAU WAS "BACKING AWAY FROM THE FIGHT BECAUSE HE IS NOT SURE HE COULD WIN IT."

6. RADIO COVERAGE WAS LARGELY FACTUAL WITH SOME COMMENTARY. CBC MORNING NEWS MAY 12, FOR EXAMPLE, CARRIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STINGING COMMENTARY BY ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF EDMONTON NEWSPAPER. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT TRUDEAU'S STATED REASONS FOR DELAY WERE NONSENSE AND THAT ADVERSE POLLING DATA WERE THE ROOT CAUSE.

7. COMMENT: VERY HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN DUE TO FACT THAT MEDIA WERE ENTIRELY GEARED UP FOR AN ELECTION STORY, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. SPIN-OFF FROM COMMON THEME THAT DECISION WAS CAUSED BY FLAGGING SUPPORT FOR LIBERALS WAS A VARIETY OF SPECULATION AS TO WHEN ELECTION WILL BE HELD AND WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN INTERIM. ON FORMER, ANALYSTS EXAMINED PROS AND CONS OF ELECTION NEXT FALL OR SPRING. A GENERAL CONCLUSION WAS THAT IT COULD COME EITHER TIME. SPECULATION ON LATTER RANGED FROM POSSIBILITY OF A SUMMER CABINET RESHUFFLE TO THEORY THAT TRUDEAU MIGHT RESIGN OR EVEN BE FORCED OUT BY HIS PARTY PRIOR TO ELECTION. IN EMBASSY VIEW, CABINET RESHUFFLE IS QUITE POSSIBLE (REFTEL). TRUDEAU'S DEPARTURE, HOWEVER, IS A DEMONSTRATION OF MEDIA IMAGINATION AND HIGHLY IMPROBABLE. ENDERS

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## Message Attributes

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